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# Tolstoy and his Message





# TOLSTOY AND HIS MESSAGE

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Author of "Plain  
Talk in Psalm and  
Parable," "The  
Earth for All," "Cap-  
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etc

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He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how  
can he love God whom he hath not seen?

—*John the Apostle.*

To love God means to desire that which He desires, and  
He desires universal welfare.—*Tolstoy.*

The desire for good is not God, but only one of His mani-  
festations; one of the sides from which we see God. God  
manifests Himself in me by the desire for good.—*Tolstoy.*

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## CHAPTER I

### BOYHOOD AND MANHOOD

THEY tell a story of Leo Tolstoy which may or may not be true, but which at any rate is characteristic of the man, and brings into relief the peculiar dramatic quality of his mind. He was a student at the University of Kazan, and had only spent a few months at that great Russian seat of learning, when he was invited to attend a ball at the house of a nobleman, who lived upon his estate near the city. It was a bitter cold winter night, and the snow lay heavy upon the ground and young Tolstoy went out from town in a sleigh driven by a peasant-coachman, for there was then no separate liveried class in Russia, and the farm-hand in summer might become a driver in winter. Tolstoy passed the night in feasting and dancing, enjoying himself as a youth of eighteen would be likely to under the circumstances, and when he came out at an early hour of the morning

wrapped in his furs, he was horrified to find his coachman half-frozen to death. It was with the greatest difficulty, and only after hours of chafing and rubbing, that the man was brought back to consciousness and his life finally saved.

This scene remained graven upon the heart of the young student, and he could not dismiss it from his thoughts. Why, thought he, should I, a young nobleman of eighteen, who have never been of any use to any one and perhaps never shall be—why should I be permitted to pass the night in this great house, elegantly furnished and comfortably warmed, and to consume in wine and delicacies the value of many days' labour, while this poor peasant, the representative of the class that builds and heats the houses and provides the food and drink, is shut out in the cold? He saw, with the true instinct of a seer, that it was no accidental event, but the picture in miniature of the civilization of the day, in which one class sowed and reaped, and another enjoyed the harvest. Tolstoy took this lesson so to heart that he abandoned his university career as a selfish luxury, and went down to his country estate, which the early death of his parents had already placed in his hands, with the determination of devoting his life to the serfs whose interests he found entrusted to him. It was thus a dramatic

incident which formed the first turning-point in Tolstoy's life, and we shall see that again and again he has been influenced by such sights when book or argument could never have moved him.

The estate to which Tolstoy retired was the one on which he was born on September 9, 1828, and on which he still lives. Yasnaia Poliana (for such is its name, meaning Clear-field) is situated at a distance of ten miles from the large manufacturing town of Toulâ and about 120 miles south of Moscow, and it is here that he has passed most of his life.

He gives us some account of his boyhood in *My Confession*, and we may easily fill out the picture from the story of little Nicholas, in his romance *Boyhood, Adolescence, Youth*. We here have a speaking representation of life on a Russian country estate of that period, with its patriarchal habits, its strange mixture of aristocratic manners and democratic familiarity, its easy-going shiftlessness and its quaint superstitions. The boy himself is brought up in the Orthodox Russian Church amongst his brothers and sisters under the charge of a German tutor, but we infer that he learns most from the simple peasantry, and from field and forest. He is a bright, quick, sensitive, affectionate lad, but far from good-looking, for he makes the sad discovery in the looking-glass that there is nothing aristocratic in his



face, that on the contrary he is for all the world like a peasant, or "moujik."

While he is still a boy, the family remove to Moscow. When Leo was eleven years old, a pupil in a gymnasium spent a Sunday with them, and informed the children of the latest discovery at school, namely that there was no God, and that all that was taught on the subject was an invention. "I remember well," he says, "how interested my older brothers were in this news; I was admitted to their deliberations, and we all eagerly accepted the theory as something particularly attractive and possibly quite true."

Thus we have Tolstoy, while hardly out of the nursery, a full-fledged nihilist, as he calls himself—not indeed a dynamiter, but, as the name implies, a believer in nothing—and the story of his life is the story of a sincere, spiritually-minded man in search of a satisfying faith. From the first he honestly wished to become a good man, but he received no encouragement from others. His longings for a virtuous life were met with laughter, but whenever he gave way to his lower passions he found only praise and approval. "My kind-hearted aunt," he tells us, "a really good woman, used to say to me that there was one thing above all others which she wished for me—a *liaison* with a married woman—'nothing so forms a young man.' "



If Tolstoy left the university because of a dramatic picture of the labour question as a whole, he found himself at Yasnaia Poliana confronted with the same problem in its simplest and most comprehensive form, namely the land question. Why, indeed, should he, a lad of eighteen, own thousands of acres of the surface of the earth which God has given to the children of men, while his serfs, who cultivated it and made it fruitful, did not possess a foot? There is no reasonable answer to this question, and while Tolstoy may not have put it to himself in that form at that time, still he soon learned the futility of benevolence based upon landlordism.

In his story, *A Russian Proprietor*, he gives the results of his experiences as a country gentleman, and shows how his efforts were misunderstood by the peasants, and how impossible it was to get into touch with them. Over fifty years later, continuing the history of the same Prince Nekhludof, in his great novel, *Resurrection*, he gives the true solution of the land question by making his hero adopt the simple device of the single-tax as advocated by Henry George.

After a few years spent in this unsuccessful experiment, Tolstoy gave it up, and secured a commission in the army. He served in the artillery in the Crimea, and when the Crimean War broke out he asked to be transferred to

Sebastopol, and took an active part in the defence of that city. Here he was surrounded by those dramatic scenes upon which his soul was wont to feed. It was war itself that taught Tolstoy to abhor war, and his early books, written at this period and giving vivid accounts of warfare, while they do not explicitly condemn war, are sufficiently realistic to discredit it at least. And in one passage of his *Sebastopol* he seems to anticipate his final judgment on military life. He is describing a truce for the purpose of burying the dead after a sortie. "Thousands of people crowd together, look at, speak to, and smile at one another. And these people—Christians confessing the one great law of love and self-sacrifice—looking at what they have done, do not at once fall repentant on their knees before Him who has given them life and laid in the soul of each a fear of death and a love of good and of beauty, and do not embrace like brothers with tears of joy and happiness."

At the end of the war Tolstoy found a literary career open before him, and he resigned his commission and went to St. Petersburg to live, where he was welcomed by the highest literary circle. For some years now he led a more or less dissipated life, drank, gambled, and fought duels, like his companions. But he was never satisfied. His soul always yearned for something better. He made the tour of Europe,

and it shows the serious character of his mind that his main object was to visit the great thinkers of England and the Continent, and question them as to the meaning of life. He learned nothing from them, however. Beyond a general belief resembling his own in the "progress" of the race, and the perfectibility of the world, they had nothing to offer him. The only thing that he learned on this journey was taught him, not by men of science, but by another dramatic incident of the kind which always so strongly appealed to him.

"During my stay in Paris," he says, "the sight of a public execution revealed to me the weakness of my superstitious belief in progress. When I saw the head divided from the body and heard the sound with which they fell separately into the box, I understood, not with my reason, but with my whole being, that no theory of the wisdom of all established things nor of progress, could justify such an act; and that if all the men in the world from the day of creation, by whatever theory, had found this thing necessary, it was not so; it was a bad thing, and that therefore I must judge of what was right and necessary, not by what men said and did, not by progress, but by what I felt to be true in my heart."

This incident is an excellent example of Tolstoy's habit of looking at things afresh as if no one had ever considered them before.

It is clear that he lacks the historical sense and that the idea of evolution has made no deep impression upon him. He does not appreciate the fact that there may have been a time when the taking of life was as natural and right for man as it is for a tiger to-day, and that the theory that we are now growing out of the brute state into a higher one explains many things otherwise inexplicable. While I believe that the standard which he applies in this matter of violence is the true standard, I should say that the people whom he criticizes are not necessarily perverse or wicked, but that they have not advanced as far as he has along the road of human progress.

While Tolstoy was abroad on a second journey the news came of the liberation of the serfs, and he hurried back to Yasnaia Poliana with the object of fitting his freed men for their new-found freedom. He became head-master of the village school, besides publishing an educational journal which gave the results of his experiences. Many of his articles were translated into French thirty years later, and published in book form, and they give an interesting view of his experiments in pedagogy. He started out with the rule that a child should not be taught anything that he did not wish to learn, and, as is his habit, he adhered to his principle through thick and thin. About twice a week, after school had been in progress

for a couple of hours, some small boy would jump up and make for the door. Expostulations were useless, and in five minutes the room would be empty, and remain so for the rest of the day. This, however, did not disconcert Tolstoy in the least. It happened, he said, only twice a week on an average, and after two hours of recitation, and to counterbalance these half-holidays he had the satisfaction of knowing that on all the other days of the week, and for two hours on these days, every boy and girl was in the schoolroom because he or she preferred to be there. They were absolutely free, and he believed that an atmosphere of freedom was more favourable to education than one of coercion. He never took up a lesson to which the children objected, nor continued it when their interest began to flag, nor interrupted it so long as they were eager for it, and he assures us that this last rule sometimes kept him in school inconveniently late in the evening, which fact would lead one to suppose that Russian children differ from those of other nations. It is to be hoped that Tolstoy will still write a book on education on the model of his *What is Art?* It could not fail to be one of the most interesting and suggestive of his works.

It was at this period that he accepted the post of county magistrate, and his various occupations wore upon him so that he fell ill,



and was obliged to drop everything and go out on the steppes to live for a time among the Kirghiz and drink Kumyss (a preparation of mare's milk) there. But his mind was not at rest, and he thinks that the change which occurred in his views fifteen years later might now have been anticipated if he had not been diverted from himself by his marriage. The romance of this event is given in *Anna Karenine*, in the courtship of Levine and Kitty, and we may state parenthetically that Tolstoy walks through all his books, for he is more or less identified with Pierre in *War and Peace*, with Levine and little Nicholas, with Nekhludoff, and others.

Tolstoy's family life was completely happy. He lived with his wife in the country and they rarely went to town. He had a large family of children, his expenses increased, and he worked assiduously at his great novels, *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenine*, and his books now brought him in a good income.

The constant employment kept him for many years from dwelling on the unsatisfactory foundation of his existence, his lack of faith, his want of a working theory of life. But the books which he was now writing, and even those written at an earlier period, give many proofs of the fact that the light was already dawning in his soul. In fact he informs us that almost from the first years of his child-

hood, when he began to read the Gospel for himself, the doctrine which teaches love, humility, meekness, self-denial, and returning good for evil, was the doctrine which touched him most.

It would be interesting to go through his earlier works and pick out the passages which reflect this feeling. But two examples will suffice. In *The Cossacks*, written in the fifties, the hero, Olenine, goes out pheasant shooting alone. He lies down in a thicket where a deer had lain before him and had left the imprint of its body on the leaves, and he is suddenly seized by an inexpressible sensation of happiness and love for all creation. The very gnats that annoyed him at first became a necessary part of the forest, and he actually ends by finding a certain charm in their persistence. He makes the sign of the Cross and murmurs a prayer. He feels his identity with the wild nature around him; he is no longer a Russian nobleman, but simply a living creature. "Why have I never been happy?" he asks. He runs over his life in his mind and its selfishness fills him with disgust. Suddenly the light bursts upon him. "Happiness," he cries, "happiness consists in living for others, that is clear. Man aspires to happiness; therefore it is a proper desire. If he tries to get it in a selfish way, in seeking wealth, glory, love, he may not succeed, and

his wishes remain unsatisfied. Then it must be selfish desires which are wrong, and not the wish to be happy. What are the dreams which may be realized irrespective of our outward circumstances? Only love and self-sacrifice." He jumps up, rejoicing in his discovery, and seeks impatiently for some one to love, to do good to, to sacrifice himself for. And when he returns to the village he insists upon presenting his horse to a young Cossack who had been his rival in the affections of one of the village maidens. He loved every one so much that he felt that this remote hamlet was his true home, that there was his family and his happiness, that nowhere else and never again could he be so full of joy.

The other instance in which Tolstoy anticipates his mature views is found in "*War and Peace*, which was written some years after his marriage. It is Pierre who speaks. "To live and avoid evil so as to escape remorse, that is too little. I have lived that way and my life was lost in uselessness. It is only now that I really live—that I try to live for others that I understand the blessing of it."



## CHAPTER II

### HIS GREAT SPIRITUAL CRISIS

THESE clear premonitions of Tolstoy's ultimate convictions show how his mind and heart were continually working beneath all the apparent absorption of his literary and domestic life. At fifty years of age he found himself celebrated, rich, surrounded by a loved and loving family, and yet so wretched that he thought seriously of suicide, and gave up shooting for fear that he might be tempted to blow out his brains, and hid a rope which offered itself too readily to him as a means of escape. The question which he had throughout his life buried under his superficial activities now rose to confront him and to insist upon an answer. The crisis, which we find in the lives of men who pass through deep spiritual experiences, and are by them fitted to guide others, was upon him. He too was led into the wilderness. The fact was that the life which had been his, however honourable in the eyes of the world, was not the true life ; his relations, the relations of a rich man, to the poor peasantry round him were not such as were demanded

by his deepest soul, and it was finally in readjusting those relations that he found peace.

The question which thus puts itself to him, he gives us in various forms: "What if I should become more famous than Pushkin and Shakespeare—than all the writers of the world," he asked himself, "What then? What result will there be from what I am doing now, and may do to-morrow? What will be the issue of my life? Why should I live? Why should I wish for anything? Why should I do anything? Is there any object in life which can survive the inevitable death which awaits us?" For an answer to these questions he sought long and patiently in every branch of human learning, but in vain. The natural sciences ignored them, philosophy admitted them but gave no satisfactory solution. He turned from the learned books to the men of his own circle of society, and made a study of their way of accounting for life. He discovered that they met the question in four equally senseless ways: namely, by remaining ignorant of it, by recognizing it but seeking distraction in ephemeral amusements and occupations, by suicide, and by a cowardly avoidance of suicide, continuing to drag on a hopeless existence.

During all this time Tolstoy laboured under the belief that his own small circle of learned, rich, and idle people formed the whole of humanity, and that the millions outside did

not deserve serious consideration, but fortunately his strange instinctive affection for the working classes came at last to his rescue and he turned to them. He began to feel that if he wished to understand the meaning of life, he must seek it amongst those who had not lost their grasp upon it, among the millions on whom rests the burden of our life and theirs. Accordingly he applied himself to the study of the simple, unlearned and poor peasantry of his neighbourhood, and at once discovered that he could not classify them with his rich friends, for they found nothing unreasonable in life, neither did they ignore the questions which had disturbed him. He became convinced that while the knowledge of the learned based on intellectual activity denied a meaning to life, the great mass of mankind have an unreasoning consciousness of life which gives a meaning to it. It was in short their faith which brought them into relation with the infinite.

Here was the defect of the learned authors and the fashionable world: neither of them provided any bridge between the finite self and the infinite—neither of them assigned any reasonable function to the finite creature in an infinite world. The faith of the peasantry supplied this missing link, and he saw that this faith was not intellectual acquiescence in certain truths, but the knowledge of the mean-

ing of life—the very force itself of life. For any one to live he must either close his eyes to infinity or find some way of relating himself to the infinite. “What am I?” he asked. “A part of an infinite whole.” Here was the answer to the problem; and faith which defines our relation to the whole world is the deepest source of human wisdom.

Filled with this belief, Tolstoy sought instruction from his orthodox friends, but he found no satisfaction in their doctrines, not so much on account of the unreasonable statements that were mixed with them as because of the fact that they did not live according to the doctrines which they professed. He was persuaded that they deceived themselves. He looked in vain to them for actions showing that their conception of life had destroyed their fear of poverty, illness and death.

He turned to the believers among the poor, the pilgrims, the monks, the members of the various peasant sects. They too professed the same superstitions which offended him among the higher classes, but there was this difference: the whole life of the rich was in flat contradiction with their faith, while that of the people was in complete consistency with it.

The more Tolstoy studied the lives of the peasantry, the more he was convinced that they had a true faith, a solid foundation for their lives. They passed their days contentedly

in heavy labour; they accepted illness and sorrow unresistingly, in the assurance that all was for the best; they lived, suffered, and drew near death in quiet confidence and often with joy. Among them death is almost invariably easy, without terror and despair. In all these things their life presented the greatest contrast to that of the world of wealth and culture.

This distinction between rich and poor, which had so long haunted the mind of Tolstoy like a phantom, now took the form of a substantial conviction, and the manner of life of his own class became senseless and repulsive to him. He saw clearly that the difficulty in finding the meaning of life arose from leading a false and artificial life, and from not sharing in the common life of humanity.

Throughout all this period of mental torment, his heart had been oppressed by a feeling which he says he cannot describe otherwise than as a searching after God, a feeling of dread, of orphanhood, of isolation. He now made every effort to apprehend what God was. Sometimes for a moment he would seem to have found Him and then only he would feel that he really lived, but he would soon lose his grasp.

One day in the early spring, while he was walking in the woods, he was as usual engaged in such thoughts. "I do not live when I lose



faith in the existence of God," he said to himself; "I only really live when I seek him." "What more then do you seek?" a voice seemed to cry within him, "this is He, He without whom there is no life. To know God and to live are one. God is life. Live to seek God and life will not be without Him." "And stronger than ever," he tells us, "life rose up within me and round me, and the light that then shone forth never left me afterwards."

"I renounced the life of my own class," his *Confession* continues, "for I had come to confess that it was not a real life, only the semblance of one, that its superfluous luxury prevented the possibility of understanding life, and that in order to do so I must know, not an exceptional parasitic life, but the simple life of the working classes, of those who produce life and give it a meaning." And once more he turned to the Russian peasantry, but he soon was impressed by the fact that their simple faith in the necessity of following God's will by labour, humility, patience, and goodwill to all men, was bound up with much superstition. However, he tried to ignore this, and returned to the church of his childhood.

For three years he was a regular attendant at the little village church at Yasnia Poliana, striving with all his might to enter into the spirit of the peasants and to overlook the contradictions, obscurities and superstitions of

their cult. But finally the obstacle which turned him away from the church was not a matter of form or theory, but a purely practical and ethical matter which shocked his essentially practical mind. It was in the year 1878, and the great Russo-Turkish war had broken out. The Holy Synod ordered prayers to be said in the churches for the success of the Russian armies, and when Tolstoy heard the lips of the priest, who had so often read the Gospel injunction to love your enemies and do good to those who despitefully use you, utter supplications in the name of Jesus to the Almighty that He might destroy the Turks with sword and bombshell, or words to that effect, his soul revolted at the blasphemy and as he left the building he shook the dust from his feet.

Tolstoy's struggle to gain the truth seemed for a moment to have failed, but he clutched at one remaining straw. The Church was founded upon the Gospels. (In Russia they say "the Gospels," when we say "the Bible," and they give the proper precedence to the four biographies of Jesus.) The Church was founded upon the Gospels and any truth which the Church possesses must be contained in those Gospels. He would study them for himself; and he set to work with his usual thoroughness, single-mindedness and patience. He took up the Greek language again, so that he might not be misled by translators, and the result of

his labour is shown in a complete commentary in three volumes with the Greek text in one column, the translation in another and his notes below.

Tolstoy is not a scholar and his knowledge of Greek is not profound. There are some drawbacks also in his methods. For instance, when he does not like a verse he simply leaves it out, a wonderfully simple expedient which seems to have escaped the ingenuity of former commentators, and it is remarkable that they never thought of it, it is so satisfactory—to the commentator. But making all allowances for Tolstoy's arbitrary ways and his lack of scholarship, the fact remains that his dramatic quality of mind has enabled him to enter into the spirit of the Gospel narrative as few other writers have ever done. He describes the events as if they had occurred in Moscow to-day, and we see with new insight why the Pharisees spake thus and why the disciples made such and such an answer.

When Tolstoy began to examine the record of the evangelists, he was struck by the fact that the texts upon which the Church founded its dogmas were invariably obscure, while those which teach us how to live are clear and to the point. He read the Gospel over and over again and he was most impressed by the Sermon on the Mount. Nowhere else did he find such plain and definite precepts, and for that reason



he looked particularly to these three chapters of St. Matthew for a solution of his doubts. Whenever he read them his heart was touched by the idea of turning the cheek to the smiter of giving up our cloak to him who takes our coat, of loving our enemies; and yet these texts seemed to call for an impossible self-sacrifice which was inconsistent with true life.

He sought counsel in the commentaries and treatises of learned theologians, but they gave him no help. It was only after he had given up all expectation of aid from such sources and had ceased to expend deep thought and intellectual skill in comparing texts, and when at last he approached the simple account of Christ's words as a little child, that he came to understand them. "The text that gave me the key to the truth," he says, "was the 39th verse of the fifth chapter of St. Matthew: 'Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. *But I say unto you that ye resist not evil.*' The simple meaning of these words suddenly flashed full upon me; I accepted the fact that Christ *meant* exactly what He *said*, and then, though I had found nothing new, all that had hitherto obscured the truth cleared away, and the truth itself arose before me in all its solemn importance."

"Christ was not exaggerating. He says, 'Resist not him that is evil;' but if you obey Him in this, you may meet some one who,

having smitten you on one cheek and meeting with no resistance, will smite you on the other ; who, after taking away your coat, will take away your cloak also ; having profited by your work will oblige you to work on ; who will take and never give back. ‘ Nevertheless I say unto you, that ye resist not him that is evil.’ Still do good to those that even smite and abuse you. : : : Christ meant to say, ‘ Whatever men may do to you, bear, suffer, submit, but never resist evil.’ What could be clearer, more intelligible and more indubitable than this ? As soon as I understood the exact meaning of these simple words, all that had appeared to me confused in the doctrine of Christ grew intelligible ; what had seemed contradictory now became consistent, and what I had deemed superfluous became indispensable. All united in one whole, one part fitting into and supporting the other, like the pieces of a broken statue put together again into their proper place.”

Let us briefly glance at the remaining years of Count Tolstoy’s history before returning to the consideration of the system of ethics to which his admission of the doctrine of non-resistance led him. In 1881 he once more made Moscow his home, and sought in schemes of philanthropy some outlet for his new-found spiritual energy. A census of the city was in progress and he had himself appointed as census-taker in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in

order that he might become familiar with the population. He happened to meet the peasant sectary and religious reformer Soutaieff and explained to him his plans for the care of the aged and orphans and for putting an end to all misery in the city, expecting to receive encouragement from him, but the moujik kept silence. Finally Tolstoy asked him what he thought of the scheme. "That's all nonsense," was the answer.

"Why?"

"Because no good can come from it."

"How so? Does not the Gospel teach us to clothe the naked and feed the hungry?"

"Yes, but money will not do. They need moral help."

"But would you let them die of hunger and cold?"

"Not at all," said Soutaieff. "But how many paupers are there?"

"Nearly 20,000 at Moscow."

He smiled. "And are there not a million hearths in Russia?" he asked. "Let us work with them, and have them eat at our tables and hear good words from us; that would be true almsgiving. All the rest is absurdity."

The truth of these remarks grew upon Tolstoy. It was a fact; his much vaunted philanthropy was a mistake. The poor to whom he offered money, saw him in his fine clothes and well-appointed carriage and knew that he was

only giving away what he had easily taken from others. He always experienced an uncomfortable sensation in giving money and the people to whom he gave also appeared ill at ease in their relations to him.

He learned that, so far from uniting people in bonds of affection, there is nothing which separates them so surely as money given and taken in the way of ordinary charity. He had a plan for a charitable society for collecting the superfluous wealth of the rich and distributing it among the poor, but he began to have doubts of the righteousness of such an institution. His doubts were confirmed by another little event which left a convincing dramatic picture upon his memory.

He had already made up his mind that man, having arms and legs as well as a brain, should find useful work for them all, and he had selected for his own manual labour while he was in town the sawing of wood in the wood-yards of the suburbs. One day as he was walking back to the city with two peasants who had been sawing wood with him, an old beggar approached them asking for alms. Tolstoy and one of his companions each gave him a small coin, and this little incident set Tolstoy thinking. Those two acts looked alike, he thought, but they were altogether different. This man earned the coin that he gave. He was giving his own labour; he was giving himself. Then

again, he is very poor. He needs every penny he can get. To-night at supper he may have to go without some necessary of life, as we should call it, because he has given that piece of money away. And now, how is it with me? In the first place, I have so much money that I could not possibly miss my coin; I should scarcely know whether I had it or not. And then, how did I get it? It is part of the rent of one of my farms in the country. I have simply taken it out of the pocket of a peasant in the country and put it into the hat of a peasant in the city; that is all I have had to do with it.

And from the lesson of this incident Tolstoy concluded that the only true Christian almsgiving was to give of your own earnings, your own life, and to give something that required some degree of self-denial. He now saw that there was nothing in his charitable scheme which would respond to the needs of his heart. It was clear to him, too, that it was only by keeping the poor at arm's length that a rich man could secure a quiet conscience in ordinary charitable work, for the most cruel of men could scarcely dine with fine courses in the presence of people with empty stomachs or with nothing but black bread to eat.

We separate ourselves from the poor by a barrier of customs and conventionalities, of masonic signs, as it were,—a knowledge of



which is requisite to admittance to our society, and Tolstoy determined that this barrier must be broken down before the poor could be effectually helped. He was living the wrong life; he was sunk in the mire up to his neck and yet wished to aid others to get out. The upper classes by their idleness, their luxury, their useless occupations, forced the working-classes lower and lower, and made the gulf between them wider and wider. "I am sitting on the back of a man whom I am crushing," says Tolstoy; "I insist on his carrying me, and without setting him free, I tell him that I pity him a great deal, and that I have only one desire, that of improving his condition by all possible means. And yet, I never get off his back. If I wish to help the poor, I must not be the cause of the poverty." <sup>1</sup>

And Tolstoy was filled with disgust for the fashionable life he had so long been living and which had concealed the truth from him so completely. He was impelled by an irresistible impulse to renounce the luxuries of his position, and he began to wear the peasant's garb as a protest against the falsehoods of caste and

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<sup>1</sup> Thoreau's Essay on Civil Disobedience: "If I devote myself to other pursuits and contemplations, I must first see, at least, that I do not pursue them sitting upon another man's shoulders. I must get off him first, that he may pursue his contemplations too."

monopoly. And he saw that the reason that he had been ignorant of his true position was that he had looked upon his money as the same as the peasant's. Money has long since lost its simple function of serving as a medium for the exchange of the products of labour. In a natural Christian society that would be its only use, but as things are, with the presence of unequal opportunities and unjust distribution of wealth, it represents might and not right. In the peasant's hands money represents work ; in the landlord's it stands for force, and nothing else. Money, in fact, according to Tolstoy, has become a means of enslaving the poor. Money was a great evil ; so too were cities, in his estimation, attracting peasants from the country to wait upon the caprices of the rich.

And now Tolstoy turned his back upon Moscow, resolved to lead a natural life at Yasnaya Poliana, and as far as in him lay to get off the back of the poor brethren ; and there he continues to live, writing day by day moral tales for the peasants, and treatises and essays for the world at large, and coming to town for a time in the winter only when agriculture is impossible, and thus exerting his personal influence upon those who gather at his house, a valuable privilege in a country in which he cannot publish his deepest thoughts.

## CHAPTER III

## TOLSTOY'S ANSWER TO THE RIDDLE OF LIFE

It is time now that we should form some idea of Tolstoy's opinions as a whole, and in order to appreciate their organic oneness we must try first to obtain his central point of view. This is best given, it seems to me, in his little treatise *On Life*. I remember well my first acquaintance with this book. I was living in Alexandria, in Egypt, at the time, and I chanced to pick up a French copy of it (*De la Vie*, translated by Countess Tolstoy) at a book-seller's in that city. I knew little of Tolstoy then. I had, however, read *Anna Karenina* years before, and been duly impressed by it, and afterwards I had read a collection of his practical essays on vicious habits, which had seemed to me rather narrow and ascetic, but which nevertheless had had the effect of making me stop smoking for three or four days—no mean achievement at that time even for a Tolstoy. These recollections induced me to buy the volume *On Life*, and I took it home with me and read it through almost at one sitting on a Sunday. I cannot do better perhaps



than to give a *resumé* of his argument in this book.

Most men, he says, lead only an animal life, and among these there are always some who think themselves called upon to guide humanity. They undertake to teach the meaning of life without understanding it themselves. These teachers are divided into two classes. To the first, composed of scientific men, Tolstoy gives the name of "Scribes." These it is who declare that man's life is nothing but his existence between birth and death, and that it proceeds from mechanical forces—that is, from forces which we style mechanical for the express purpose of distinguishing them from life. It is only in the infancy of a science, when it is as yet vague and indefinite, that it can thus pretend to account for all phenomena of life. Astronomy made the attempt when it was known as astrology; chemistry assumed the same rôle under the name of alchemy; and to-day the science of biology is passing through a similar phase. While occupied with one or more aspects of life, it claims to embrace the whole. The other class of false doctors he calls the "Pharisees." They are those who profess verbally the tenets of the founders of the religions in which they have been educated, but who do not comprehend their real meaning and consequently content themselves with insisting on forms and ceremonies.

The wars of the Scribes and Pharisees—that is, of false science and false religion—have so obscured the definitions of life laid down ages ago by the great thinkers of mankind, that the Scribes are quite ignorant that the dogmas of the Pharisees have any reasonable foundation at all; and, strange to say, the fact that the doctrines of the great masters of old have so impressed men by their sublimity that they have usually attributed to them a supernatural origin, is enough to make the Scribes reject them. Because the speculations of Aristotle, Bacon and Comte have appealed to only a small number of students—because they have never been able to gain a hold on the masses and have thus avoided the exaggerations produced by superstition—this clear mark of their insignificance is admitted as evidence of their truth. As for the teachings of the Brahmins, of Buddha, of Zoroaster, of Lao-Tse, of Confucius, of Isaiah, and also of Christ, they are taxed with superstition and error simply because they have completely transformed the lives of millions of men.

Turning from the futile strife of Scribes and Pharisees, we should begin our researches with that which we alone know with certitude, and that is the “I” within us. Life is what I feel in myself, and this life science cannot define. Nay, it is my idea of life rather which determines what I am to consider as science, and I

learn all outside of myself solely by the extension of my knowledge of my own mind and body. We know from within that man lives only for his own happiness, and his aspiration towards it and his pursuit of it constitute his life. At first he is conscious of the life in himself alone, and hence he imagines that the good which he seeks must be his own individual good. His own life seems the real life, while he regards the life of others as a mere phantom. He soon finds out that other men take the same view of the world, and that the life in which he shares is composed of a vast number of individualities, each bent on securing its own welfare, and consequently doing all it can to thwart and destroy the others. He sees that in such a struggle it is almost hopeless for him to contend, for all mankind is against him. If, on the other hand, he succeeds by chance in carrying out his plans for happiness, he does not even then enjoy the prize as he anticipated. The older he grows, the rarer become the pleasures ; ennui, satiety, trouble and suffering go on increasing ; and before him lie old age, infirmity and death. He will go down to the grave, but the world will continue to live.

The real life, then, is the life outside him, and his own life, which originally appeared to him the one thing of importance, is after all a deception. The good of the individual is an imposture, and if it could be obtained it would

cease at death: The life of man as an individuality seeking his own good, in the midst of an infinite host of similar individualities engaged in bringing one another to naught and being themselves annihilated in the end, is an evil and an absurdity. It cannot be the true life.

Our quandary arises from looking upon our animal life as the real life. Our real life begins with the waking of our consciousness, at the moment when we perceive that life lived for self cannot produce happiness. We feel that there must be some other good. We make an effort to find it, but, failing, we fall back into our old ways. These are the first throes of the birth of the veritable human life. This new life only becomes manifest when the man once for all renounces the welfare of his animal individuality as his aim in life. By so doing he fulfils the law of reason, the law which we all are sensible of within us—the same universal law which governs the nutrition and reproduction of beast and plant.

Our real life is our willing submission to this law, and not, as science would have us hold, the involuntary subjection of our bodies to the laws of organic existence. Self-renunciation is as natural to man as it is for birds to use their wings instead of their feet; it is not a meritorious or heroic act; it is simply the necessary condition precedent of genuine human life.

This new human life exhibits itself in our animal existence just as animal life does in matter. Matter is the instrument of animal life, not an obstacle to it ; and so our animal life is the instrument of our higher human life and should conform to its behests.

Life, then, is the activity of the animal individuality working in submission to the law of reason. Reason shows man that happiness cannot be obtained by a selfish life, and leaves only one outlet open for him, and that is Love. Love is the only legitimate manifestation of life. It is an activity which has for its object the good of others. When it makes its appearance, the meaningless strife of the animal life ceases.

Real love is not the preference of certain persons whose presence gives one pleasure. This, which is ordinarily called love, is only a wild stock on which true love may be grafted, and true love does not become possible until man has given up the pursuit of his own welfare. Then at last all the juices of his life come to nourish the noble graft, while the trunk of the old tree, the animal individuality, pours into it its entire vigour. Love is the preference which we accord to other beings over ourselves. It is not a burst of passion, obscuring the reason, but on the contrary no other state of the soul is so rational and luminous, so calm and joyous ; it is the natural condition of children and the wise.



Active love is attainable only for him who does not place his happiness in his individual life, and who also gives free play to his feeling of good-will towards others. His well-being depends upon love as that of a plant on light. He does not ask what he should do, but he gives himself up to that love which is within his reach. He who loves in this way alone possesses life. Such self-renunciation lifts him from animal existence in time and space into the regions of life. The limitations of time and space are incompatible with the idea of real life. To attain to it man must trust himself to his wings.

Man's body changes ; his states of consciousness are successive and differ from each other ; what then is the " I " ? Any child can answer when he says, " I like this ; I don't like that." The " I " is that which likes—which loves. It is the exclusive relationship of a man's being with the world, that relation which he brings with him from beyond time and space. It is said that in his extreme old age, St. John the Apostle had the habit of repeating continually the words, " Brethren, love one another." His animal life was nearly gone, absorbed in a new being for which the flesh was already too narrow. For the man who measures his life by the growth of his relation of love with the world, the disappearance at death of the limitations of time and space is only the mark of a higher degree of light.



My brother, who is dead, acts upon me now more strongly than he did in life ; he even penetrates my being and lifts me up towards him. How can I say that he is dead. Men who have renounced their individual happiness never doubt their immortality. Christ knew that He would continue to live after His death because He had already entered into the true life which cannot cease. He lived even then in the rays of that other centre of life toward which He was advancing, and He saw them reflected on those who stood around Him. And this every man who renounces his own good beholds ; he passes in this life into a new relation with the world for which there is no death ; on one side he sees the new light, on the other he witnesses its actions on his fellows after being refracted through himself ; and this experience gives him an immovable faith in the stability, immortality, and eternal growth of life. Faith in immortality cannot be received from another ; you cannot convince yourself of it by argument. To have this faith you must have immortality ; you must have established with the world in the present life the new relation of life, which the world is no longer wide enough to contain.

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The above abstract gives a most inadequate idea of Count Tolstoy's philosophy of life, but it is sufficient to bring out the salient points,

to wit, his idea of the failure of man's ordinary life, of the necessity, in the course of nature, of loving self-renunciation, and of the resulting growth in love, and the realization of immortality on earth.

"But this is sheer mysticism," is doubtless the first objection. Yes, it assuredly is, but that is no argument against it. Mysticism is nothing but the recognition of the miserable world as a palpable fact, and not as an abstract theory. All religions had their origin in mysticism, and in so far as they have wandered away from it, just so far have they fallen into formalism. Mysticism is really religion at first hand, such as the faith of General Gordon, who used to say that he believed in the "real presence," meaning, as he explained, the actual manifestation of God in his own soul. It is not becoming for those at least who profess to put their confidence in Him who said, "The kingdom of God is within you," to quarrel with the man who finds it there. In short, all Christians should be more or less mystics.

If, then, admitting that the treatise *On Life* is in fact mystical, we compare it with the works of those to whom the name of mystic is usually given, we are at once struck by the remarkable sanity of the Russian author. The practice of exploring the unseen world is often dangerous for those who attempt it, but Count Tolstoy has escaped the vagaries of Boehmen, the

visions of Swedenborg, and the hysterical excesses of St. Theresa. And the reason of his freedom from these extravagances is not far to seek. He opens a door into the vestibule, but it is not the door of mere contemplation, of quietism, of retirement into self. There is something morbid in the very idea of making deliberate excursions into another sphere. Here lies the mistake of the Christian ascetics, of the Persian Sufis, of the Hindoo Buddhists, and of the Theosophists of to-day. We may well suspect any form of religion which withdraws a man's interests and labours from this world; its corner-stone must be selfishness in spite of any disguises.

Tolstoy's door to the mysteries, however, is simply active love for mankind. According to him, preoccupation in working for the happiness of others has a reflex action in the depth of our being which makes us feel eternal life. It is this intensely practical side of his mysticism which preserves his equilibrium. He simply says to us: "Renounce your selfish ends; love all men—all creatures—and devote your life to them. You will then be conscious of possessing eternal life, and for you there will be no death."

So much for Count Tolstoy's philosophy of life. For some reason it took hold of me with a strange power. I was still a church member and went regularly to church, but I had no

genuine faith, and was not sure of anything intangible, and now the simple teaching that it is man's higher nature to love—that if he would only let himself love and renounce his selfish aims, he would enter a wider sphere, find his immortal soul, and in fact be born again—all this struck me as a great new discovery. I leaned back in my study chair ; I tried to love, and—could I believe my own sensations ?—I did actually feel that I had risen to a loftier plane, and that there was something immortal within me. I remember going out into the garden and giving a small coin—a half piastre—to a little Soudanese boy who was playing there, and it seemed to me that no act of mine had ever given me so much pleasure, and for weeks after the novelty of the experience of loving was a continual delight. Nor was the change merely temporary, for since that day the world has never looked to me quite as it used to.

It is in the light of Tolstoy's teaching in this book *On Life*, that we must approach his ethical works, *My Confession*, *What to Do*, *The Kingdom of God is Within You*, and the rest, for they all have their source in the religious conceptions of the former book.

In the same way in the Gospels themselves, from which Tolstoy derives at once his principles and his practice, we find different phases of thought in the different books. The Evangelists draw truth from the same well, but some

let down their buckets deeper than others. St. Luke is a practical hand-book for social reformers, and none more radical has been published since his day, but he scarcely reaches the source of the spring. He condemns riches as stoutly as Tolstoy; he, too, puts poverty upon a pinnacle, but from his Gospel alone we should hardly guess the reason why. It was left for St. John to lay open the divine source of self-sacrifice and to make known once for all the infinite power of love restoring men to unity with God and with each other, and he does it almost without reference to the practical results in life which the inspiration of that power must accomplish. St. Luke's Gospel is the necessary complement of St. John's.

Some one has said that as St. Peter first led the Apostolic Church, and then St. Paul, and finally St. John, so in the history of the Christian Era, St. Peter, represented by the Catholic Church, was the first leader, and after him St. Paul, the apostle of Protestantism and justification by faith, and that now again it is the day of St. John, the apostle of Love. There is much truth in this parallel. It is the spirit of St. John, which is, if I mistake not, the Age-Spirit of our times, the spirit with which Tolstoy is so impregnated. Does then this philosophy of St. John, which the Russian has adopted, give logical coherence to the seeming extravagances of his practical teaching, just as the Fourth



Gospel supplies the motive for the startling injunctions of the Third ?

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BASIS OF HIS MORAL AND SOCIAL CODE

TOLSTOY takes as the basis of his practical moral system the five injunctions of Christ in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew. These are the five commandments which should, he thinks, supersede the decalogue.

I. " Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill ; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment ; but I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment ; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council ; and whosoever shall say, Thou Fool, shall be in danger of hell fire " (v. 21-2).

II. " Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery ; but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart " (v. 27-8).

III. " Again, ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear



thyself but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths ; but I say unto you, swear not at all ; neither by the heavens, for it is the throne of God ; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet ; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your speech be, Yea, yea ; nay, nay ; and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil one " (v. 33-7).

IV. " Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth ; but I say unto you, resist not him that is evil ; but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man would go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go one mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away " (v. 38-42).

V. " Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy ; but I say unto you, love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you ; that you may be sons of your Father which is in Heaven : for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye ? Do not even the publicans the same ? And if ye salute your brethren only,

what do ye more than others? Do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Whether or not these five injunctions form, as Count Tolstoy supposes, a complete and logical statement covering the whole field of morals—and I confess that they do not seem to me to combine together and supplement each other as perfectly as he thinks, although they are all absolutely consistent with each other—in any event they form a convenient introduction to a consideration of Tolstoy's views.

The first commandment, not to be angry with one's brother, used to read in the authorized version, "Whoever is angry with his brother without a cause." The revised version has omitted the qualifying words "without a cause" upon the ground that the best manuscripts do not contain them. The insertion of these words is a fair example of the way in which the Gospels have been toned down to suit the prejudices of its readers. Such alterations were perhaps mere marginal comments and may afterwards have been copied into the text by mistake. We should then never be angry with our brother; we should treat all mankind with brotherly love; we should apply to no one an expression of contempt, such as Raca, and thou fool. It is by standing aloof from others, by refusing to recognize them as

equals, by class distinctions, in short, that brotherly love is chiefly imperilled, and it is against these class distinctions, as the main source of enmity between men, that Tolstoy sets himself.

"I know now," he says, "that it is only he who humbles himself before others, who works for others, that stands above the rest. I understand now that what is highly esteemed by men is abomination in the sight of God, and why woe is foretold to the rich and famous, why beggars and those that are humble are the blessed. . . . I can no longer try to rise above other men, to separate myself from them, nor can I admit either rank or title for myself or others, except the title of 'man.' I can no longer seek fame and glory, nor can I help trying to get rid of my riches which separate me from my fellow-creatures. I cannot help seeking in my way of life, in its surroundings, in my food, my clothes, my manners, to draw nearer the majority of men, and to avoid all that separates me from them."

The second commandment condemns lust in the heart and goes on to forbid the putting away of one's wife "saving for the cause of fornication" (v. 32). This exception is not made either in St. Mark or in St. Luke (Mark x., 2-12 ; Luke xvi. 18), and it seems very clear to me, although the revised version retains the words, that they were introduced into the text in the

same way as the words "without a cause" in the first commandment. Christ enjoins purity of mind upon all, and absolute fidelity in thought as well as deed between husband and wife, and this teaching Tolstoy accepts in its fulness. "Monogamy," he says, "is the natural law of mankind."

His novel, the *Kreutzer Sonata*, was attacked on the ground that it condemned marriage altogether, and it is true that he only admits physical marriage as made necessary by the hardness of our hearts. Physical love is, he tells us, a mere animal passion, and as such unworthy of the highest manhood. "The ideal of the Christian is not marriage, but the love of God and one's neighbour." It is certainly true, whether we lean to these conclusions of Tolstoy's or not, that the last word has not yet been said on the subject of Christian marriage. No sufficient commentary has yet been written on the sayings of Christ on this subject (see Matt. xix. 10-12; Luke xiv. 26), nor upon the bearing of his example. I will only add that Tolstoy does not seem to have considered the possibility of a true spiritual marriage and of the effect it might produce in purifying physical relations. His views appear to be almost identical with those of Saint Paul.

The Gospel presents us, in common with all religions, a mystical view of the sex, which the commentator cannot ignore. We are so fami-

liar with the image of bride and bridegroom as applied to Christ and the Church, that we miss its significance. In the same way Jehovah and Israel are continually pictured as husband and wife. Osiris in Egypt, Dionysus in Hellas, the givers of wine, are the male gods of the mysteries; and Isis and Ceres, the givers of bread, are their spouses. It is a curious fact that the bread and wine have in like manner become the elements of the Christian feast, and in the ancient *Teachings of the Twelve Apostles* we are told that the bread stands for the Church, the bride, while the wine represents our Lord. Thus in the "communion" between Christian and Christian, and between them and God the idea of sex is not wanting. It is not fair to say that these conceptions were entirely foreign to Christ and that they were introduced into Christianity after he had passed away, for they are anticipated in many of his sayings. We may reasonably infer that sex held a larger place in the thoughts of Jesus than Tolstoy allows.

The third commandment of Christ is: "Swear not at all," supplanting the old injunction that men should perform their oaths. Our author regards this commandment as having special reference to the oath of allegiance, which in Russia is required of every subject. We swear to obey the commands of men, and those commands may be contrary to the laws



of God: This principle of refusing to bind ourselves for the future has a wide scope. Fifty years ago Thoreau had evolved the idea on the banks of Walden Pond, although he evidently did not have the Gospels in mind. He says: "Must the citizen even for a moment or in the least degree resign his conscience to the legislator? Why has every man a conscience then? I think we should be men first and subjects afterwards. It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right." (Essay on Civil Disobedience.)

The Concord Diogenes had doubtless in view an oath to support a constitution which sanctioned slavery. Would not such an oath to-day require us to take part in an unjust war? Does not an oath to perform the duties of an executor, for instance, force us to treat debtors severely instead of forgiving them, or even treating them mercifully? Whatever Christ may have meant by this declaration against oaths, I contend that Tolstoy is right in insisting upon it that men shall leave their consciences free and not bind themselves for the future, nor become slaves of their dead selves. I must be at liberty at every moment of my life to obey my conscience as a man, and not excuse myself for wrong-doing under the name of citizen, or official, or soldier, or trustee.



By assuming such functions irrevocably we stifle our personal sense of right and wrong, and in order that we may not shock ourselves too much we divide and subdivide our responsibilities until no one man feels that he is answerable for what he does. If judge and jury had to hang the prisoner themselves in cold blood, there would be fewer executions ; if we each had to butcher our own meat, there would be a great increase in the number of vegetarians. If we were obliged to evict our own tenants and sell out our own debtors, the courts would lose much of their business.

Richard Wagner, who was a great thinker as well as a great composer, agrees with Thoreau and Tolstoy in the matter of oaths. He says (*Jesus of Nazareth, a Poetic Draught*, part II. Wagner's Prose Works, vol. viii. p. 299 ; translation of W. A. Ellis) : " ' Ye shall not swear ' ; in oaths lay the binding law of a world that knew not love as yet. Let every man be free to act at every moment according to love and his ability ; bound by an oath, I am unfree ; if in its fulfilment I do good, that good is robbed of merit (as every bounden virtue) and loses the worth of conviction ; but if the oath leads me to evil, then I sin against conviction. The oath engenders every vice ; if it binds me against my profit, I shall seek to circumvent it (as every law is circumvented) and what I should quite rightly do in pursuance of my welfare,

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social  
contract

through the oath becomes a crime ; but if I find my profit in it (without doing harm to another) then I rob myself of the moral satisfaction of doing right at every instant through my own free judgment."

If I understand correctly Tolstoy's interpretation of the law against oaths, it is broadly this, that we should never do anything which  
\* | offends our consciences in our simple capacity of men and women. We cannot shift that responsibility upon society. We cannot conscientiously say : " We know that it is wrong to take rent, or interest, or to kill, or to do this or that, but so long as society authorizes us to do so, it is society's fault." This is not the Christian method, for the Christian does not cast his sins upon others, but he takes the sins of others upon himself. He is responsible for them, but they are not responsible for him.

The fourth commandment is the real keystone of Tolstoy's ethics. It is " Resist not him that is evil," and he thus enlarges upon it : " Never resist evil by violence ; never return violence for violence. If any one smites thee, bear it ; if any one takes away what is thine let him have it ; if any one make thee labour, do so."

It is a mistake, says Tolstoy, to suppose that our welfare can be secured by defending ourselves and our property against others. The  
( greater part of the evil of the world arises

from our effort to make men work for us by force. "I now understand the meaning of the words 'Man is born not to be ministered unto but to minister.' . . . If I now feel tempted to defend myself or others, my own property or that of others, by violence, I can no longer give way to the temptation. I dare not amass riches for myself. I dare not use violence of any kind against my fellow-creatures, except, perhaps, against a child in order to save it from present harm ; nor can I now take part in any act of authority whose purpose it is to protect men's property by violence. I can neither be judge nor take part in judging and condemning." And thus Tolstoy does not confine the application of this rule to our private behaviour:

The verse in St. Matthew reads : "Ye have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you resist not him that is evil." The "eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth" doctrine is thrice enunciated in the law of Moses (Ex. xxi. 24 ; Lev. xxiv. 20 ; Deut. xix. 21) and in each case it is embodied in a provision of the criminal code. Christ offers the rule of non-resistance, therefore, as a substitute for the criminal law, and it applies primarily to the official deeds of the government. Tolstoy unreservedly adopts this view. For him all government by force is wrong. \

Let us consider for a moment if this principle of non-resistance is sound: Even if Jesus en

joined such conduct, this is not sufficient of itself to force upon a Christian a course of conduct which offends his judgment. We are so constituted that we cannot accept from outside a moral obligation which does not appeal to our deepest sense of right. Our morality must be a living branch of our own life, and a graft that has no affinity with us and cannot find a new source of life in our inmost being, must be rejected no matter whence it comes. How is it then with this doctrine of non-resistance? Does it or does it not appeal to our innermost nature?

Each of us must answer this question for himself, assuring himself at the same time, as he best can, that none of his lower instincts affect his decision. I can only express my belief that the deeper we probe into our consciousness, the clearer the wisdom of that method will appear to us. We shall see that it has called forth a response in the past from some of the noblest of men, and there is every reason to believe that at the present day an ever increasing number of persons feel the truth of this teaching and the necessity of its application if the Kingdom of God is ever to come. If this is so, we can readily conceive that armed resistance on our part may become in time as abhorrent to us as it was, I believe, abhorrent to Christ. May it not be that in the future it will become as impossible for a Christian to con-

demn another to death, or evict a tenant, or fire a bomb-shell at his fellows, as it would be for him now to indulge in an act of cannibalism?

Nor would this be a weak surrender to sentiment. Violence cannot be stopped by violence. We have been trying to do this impossible feat for thousands of years, and to-day Europe has more soldiers and engines of war than ever, and in the United States there are over 10,000 homicides a year, while we all know that there is enough military spirit even in our Sunday Schools to supply several nations of savages. This is the result of the eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth system, which we fondly suppose was abolished by Christ, but which we are putting into practice every day of our lives quite as relentlessly as the ancient Hebrews or the ancient Romans.

Only a fool would attempt to stop the pendulum when it swings to the right by pushing it as violently to the left, and yet this is the chief object of most of our legislation. In precisely this way the vendettas of Corsica are kept alive between families for centuries. Murder succeeds murder and the son inherits the obligation of killing from his father. Suppose in some such case of feud a family had long years ago adopted Christ's method and refused to exact a life for a life, is it not evident that the hatred would have died out, and that just so far

learned  
from war



peace, harmony and concord would be established among men? And so with nations, would it not be better to forget Alsace and Lorraine than once again to sow the fratricidal seed that has so often filled Europe with a bloody harvest? And if this principle is applicable to such cases, surely it is equally applicable to the ordinary events of life. Some one owes you £5. Is it consistent with Christ's precepts, or His spirit, to sue him for it? Is it conceivable that Christ would have taken such a course Himself? Apart from all Christian consideration, will your lawsuit help bring on the era of universal peace, or is it any more than another ugly thrust at the same old pendulum?

No, our method has been radically wrong—the method, I mean, of enforcing upon others our own opinions on religion and morals, on law and order, on property and conduct, and on insisting upon their acceptance of our own conceptions of our own individual rights. If I can make all the world agree with me, we shall certainly have a golden age, and I start out to bring this about by force, either by taking up arms myself or by seeking to obtain for my opinions the stamp of positive law and thus of enforcing them by the mailed hand of government. Now this plan of campaign would work very well if I were the only person in the world bent upon having my own way, but I find out



very soon that every other man and woman on earth, with a few exceptions, is engaged in the same undertaking, and the result is, as might be expected, a state of indescribable confusion in which those who succumb receive little consideration. Every nation acts in the same way, and our public, as well as our private, relations are hostile. Hence comes the great mass of social and industrial suffering with which we have to contend and for which we must find a remedy. Is it not time to ask whether mankind has been attacking the disease of society in the proper way, and whether we should not make a fundamental change in its treatment?

Let us for a moment consider the diagnosis of the Good Physician. We do not as a rule look upon evil as Christ did. When we think of murder, we picture to ourselves the sufferings of the victim, the bloodshed, the life cut short, the bereaved family. Our sympathies make these the chief features of the scene, and it is to prevent these results of crime that we exert ourselves. But Jesus looked deeper. He could afford to relegate these pains and sorrows to the background, for He discerned something worse. He tells us expressly, "Fear not them which kill the body but are not able to kill the soul." According to Him the great evil is not killing but the anger against a brother. The problem with Him would be not how to pre-

vent murder but how to eradicate anger—hatred—from the breast of man.

This then is His diagnosis ; the seat of the trouble is in the evil thoughts of men, in envy, covetousness, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness. It is against these depraved instincts in himself and in others that the Christian must direct his energies, if he wishes to heal society and to lay the foundations of peace in the world. And it is against these evil thoughts and imaginings of man that Christ directs His remedy of unresisting love, and I submit that it has a power, a force, which can never be attained by repression or coercion even in their most refined forms, and which must be abandoned if recourse is had to repression and coercion. There is only one effective way of attacking evil, and that is to overcome it by good. Nor is the abolition of government involved. Our principle simply requires the abstention of the individual from acts which he cannot conscientiously perform. Nothing would be abolished until all men came to that way of thinking, and a world of non-resistants could certainly dispense with government-by-force. It is difficult for us to imagine a state without police or prisons, and so fifty years ago a school without birch-rods, rulers and slippers was practically inconceivable. The change in school-discipline shows the direction in which our civilization is moving:

Walt Whitman in one of his short poems presents the idea of the relation of the individual to civil institutions in what seems to me a truly Christian way. He says :

" I hear that it was charged against me that I sought to destroy institutions,—

But really I am neither for nor against institutions (What indeed have I in common with them ? or what with the destruction of them ?),

Only I will establish in the Mannahatta and in every city of these States, inland and sea-board,—

And in the fields and woods, and above every keel, little and large, that dents the water,

Without edifices or rules or any argument,—

The institution of the Dear Love of Comrades."

Nor is the principle of non-resistance cowardly or effeminate. The examples which we shall cite will prove that, and indeed it is sufficient to look at the tall stalwart figure of Count Tolstoy, the veteran of the Crimea, as he dares the Russian bear to do its worst, to satisfy us that his religion must be manly. But even if we had no examples to point to, we might assure ourselves of the manliness of non-resistance by arguing from the very nature of men.

The first requisite of courage is self-forgetfulness, and the first requisite of self-forgetfulness is a preponderating care of others, and this we call love. Thus it is true in the broadest sense that perfect love casteth out fear, and

the man who refrains from exerting force upon his neighbour because he loves him is the least likely of all men to fear for himself. This courage which springs from love is the courage which differentiates the man from the brute. It derives its power from the region of affections and thoughts, of love and truth, of heart and mind, which region is the proper home of the human soul. All our physical actions which do not find their motive power in that higher plane, are merely the deeds of animals, and in such deeds we can be eclipsed by the first bulldog or tiger.

But, we are told, the doctrine of non-resistance would prevent us from interfering to prevent the murder of a child, and this is clearly a *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole principle. It is probably true that few non-resistants would carry out their theory to this extent in practice, but the fact is that not one man in a million is ever placed in such a situation, while the evils of violence and force are ever present with us in all the injustices and inequalities of society, in the miseries of war, and in almost every incident of our lives. Besides, every principle of morality may be pushed to an extreme at which its application may seem doubtful, and yet the principle itself remain unquestioned. Thus we all admit the moral obligation of truthfulness, but, because it may be contented that a falsehood is justifiable to

save life, we do not for that reason throw the principle overboard, and begin to lie indiscriminately. The fact, therefore, that we might feel bound to defend a child from outrage, even by violence, is no justification for the settlement of minor disputes by the legal or illegal use of force. The real test is love, and in the vast majority of cases in which we resort to force our conscience would tell us, if we paused to listen to it, that our act is inconsistent with love—that it necessarily involves a certain degree of hatred or ill-will.

But are we, burning though we be with a desire to establish the kingdom of God, to renounce all the ordinary means of improvement with which civilization has made us acquainted? Can we improve the world without recourse to legislation, and judges and armies, and sheriffs and prisons? Christ certainly found no use for these methods. There was far more government in His day than there is now. He was surrounded by Roman and Hebrew national and municipal institutions, but He never attempted to apply them to His purposes. Only once did the idea occur to Him of using them, and this was when the tempter showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them and said, "All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." We all remember Christ's reply, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." And He never presented a



different view of the power of government. "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you."

"But," we rejoin, "these are things which we have always been taught to regard as the greatest and most important on earth." Quite so, and so Jesus says, "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." Nor would the acceptance of Christ's teachings necessarily imply an amorphous condition of society, a mad revel of individualism, nor anarchy, nor disorder.

Christianity means union and order, but the union must be organic and not mechanical, a growth and not an institution. It must be a living union, transcending the idea of kingship, passing even beyond the nobler conception of fatherhood and brotherhood, and reaching the ideal of actual identity, such as Jesus felt when He prayed that we might be one with Him as He was one with the Father, and when He declared, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

In cultivating our sense of this oneness, in preaching boldly the consequences of its application to our social life, in protesting against every infringement of the law of love which it predicates, lies the true field of activity for the



Christian reformer. To hold up the noblest ideal, trusting to its inherent persuasiveness, and abjuring all coercion—that is, believe me, the highest function of man, and history will show us that it has the most durable practical consequences. The Lord is not in the wind nor in the whirlwind, but in the still small voice, and the very climax of the New Testament shows us the Lamb upon the throne.

We can make no greater mistake than to lift our hand against wrong. The man who will not strike back is the only man who cannot be conquered, and the treatment of him becomes an insoluble problem for the tyrant. It is the non-resistant alone who can overcome superior power. Nor in the long run will he be persecuted beyond endurance. Count Tolstoy says: "If all the members of a family were Christians and gave up their lives to the service of others, no one would despoil them or kill them," and he says in another place that people who take care of their dogs because they are useful, will not, even if they have no higher motive, continue long to oppress those who cheerfully do good to them.

That the idea of non-resistance touches a chord in the human heart I can testify from my own experience. I have never presented it to an audience without having their sympathies, and I have presented it to audiences of all kinds. I recall one occasion on which I

debated the proposition, "Resolved, that the doctrine of non-resistance to evil tends to reinforce evil and to invite disaster," before a club of New York "society" ladies. So certain was I that I could have no influence upon them that I did all I could to avoid the discussion, but without effect. The affirmative was sustained with marked ability and conviction, but to my surprise, when the merits of the question (not of the debate) were put to the vote at the close of the meeting there were thirty-four votes in the negative to fourteen in the affirmative. And I think that at any average meeting the result would not be very different.

We still have the fifth commandment to consider, but we may dismiss it with a word. It is "Love your enemies." Tolstoy makes the word "enemies" mean national enemies or foreigners, and in this he is undoubtedly mistaken, but, however that may be, this rule prescribes brotherly love towards all men, even those we are most disposed to hate, whether for national or personal reasons. It would condemn much that passes for patriotism, just as it condemns much that passes for honour and self-respect.

## CHAPTER V

### HIS TEACHING TESTED BY THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT

I HAVE now given a general view of Count Tolstoy's opinions. Do they fairly represent, as he thinks they do, the teachings of Christ? It certainly seems to me that he goes no further than Jesus did. It is obviously true no portion of the Gospel or of any other book is to be interpreted according to the letter irrespective of the spirit. The object of language is to put the hearer into the same mental and spiritual position that is occupied by the speaker, so that he may see the subject from the same standpoint and in the same spirit. Now, to what spirit do Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount inevitably point?

Non-resistance to bad men, turning the other cheek to the aggressor, the refusal to defend our dearest property by law, the loosening of our purse strings, the love going forth like the sunlight to the very margin of the universe and including all men, even our enemies and persecutors; what spirit do these things indicate

if it be not a spirit of entire indifference to accumulated property—a spirit living in an atmosphere so pure that no insult or injury can disturb it—a spirit whose intense love for the offender outweighs all other considerations? And if we should endeavour to cultivate this spirit, would it not lead us to an almost literal fulfilment of these very words of Christ? I see no escape from the conclusion that Christ's language here means what it purports to mean. If it is hyperbolical and exaggerated, has it any meaning at all and is it not hopelessly misleading? When Jesus sets up standards that seem too high for us we ascribe it to Oriental imagery. Moses and St. Paul and St. John were also Orientals, but we interpret their writings literally, and why should we apply a different canon to the sayings of Christ? No, it is evident on the face of the Sermon on the Mount that He meant what He said.

But these statements in these three chapters of St. Matthew are not exceptional. The spirit of non-resistance, of indifference to property, breathe throughout His discourses. The twelve, and afterwards the seventy, are to carry no gold nor silver nor brass; . . . no wallet . . ., neither two coats, no shoes nor staff. "To great multitudes" He says, "Who-soever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple." When a man asks Him to bid his brother divide the

inheritance with him, He calls this desire to get one's own property "covetousness." In another place He says, "Sell all that ye have and give alms." He teaches us to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." He says: "Blessed are the poor" and "Woe unto you that are rich." To the young ruler he says, "Sell all that thou hast and distribute unto the poor."

We are often told that covetousness was this man's besetting sin, but those who build upon this guess forget that we have seen Christ twice give the same advice to large audiences, for covetousness is, in fact, the besetting sin of the human race: He says that only with God is it possible for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven—that is, of course, to enter into his proper relations with his fellow-men on this earth—but He nowhere hints that he can do it without getting rid of his riches.

Do we ask why Christ draws a sharp line between rich and poor? I believe that the distinction should be intuitive in the Christian soul. There is nothing more deadening to true life than wealth and purple and fine linen and the accompanying pride. We can each of us test the truth for ourselves. There is on a Sunday morning in any of our East Side Catholic Churches in New York a Christian feeling of communion and communism which is not to be



found in a fashionable congregation. It is possible to feel the brotherhood of man in East Broadway or Hester Street as it cannot be felt on Fifth Avenue. These are simple facts and we cannot understand the life of Christ until we appreciate how deeply He was imbued with this feeling. Dante beautifully expresses the relation of Jesus to the poor when he says that after He passed from earth Poverty remained widowed until St. Francis took her to his bosom—

*“Questa, privata dal primo marito, Mille e cento anni e piu dispetta e scura Fino a costui si stette senza invito.”*

Jesus bids the disciples too, when persecuted, not to resist. They are to carry no staff, and to “Flee into another city.” And when James and John wished to call down vengeance, He rebuked them and said, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.” When attacked Himself He rebuked Peter who attempted to resist: “Put up again thy sword into its place, for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword,” thus nullifying completely the words contained only in St. Luke: “He that hath none let him sell his cloak, and buy a sword.” Let us note that Peter was not even acting in self-defence, but the far nobler defence of his Master. Again He says: “He that loveth his life, loseth it,” and “Be not afraid of them which kill the body.” We may see



from these sayings of Christ that they exhibit a remarkable consistency and sustain his position in the Sermon on the Mount.

Let us also for a moment consider Christ's actions and see to what extent they agree with His words: Although frequently in danger of violence, He never resisted. His attitude as to property is well summed up by Dr. Thompson in *The Land of the Book* :

"With uncontrolled power to possess all, He owned nothing. He had no place to be born in but another man's stable, no closet to pray in but the wilderness, no place to die but on the cross of an enemy, and no grave but one lent by a friend. At His death He had absolutely nothing to bequeath to His mother: He was as free from the mercenary spirit as though He had belonged to a world where the very idea of property was unknown. And this total abstinence from all ownership was not of necessity but of choice, and I say there is nothing like it, nothing that approaches it in the history of universal man. It stands out perfectly and divinely original" (p. 407).

Jesus was the greatest of reformers. He was a Jew, living in Palestine under the most oppressive and unjust yoke of the Romans. The people continually rebelled and wished Him to lead their rebellion, and in fact this wish of theirs caused His death. And yet He never by a word or act approved of their resistance to

the Roman power, and even justified the payment of tribute.

The only occasion on which He is alleged ever to have used force, is in driving the money changers from the Temple, but the whip of small cords is only mentioned in St. John, and he alone mentions also the sheep and oxen. It is evident that the whip was merely used as the ordinary method of driving the cattle. And furthermore the cleansing of the Temple did not succeed. It was in submission unto death that Christ conquered:

We conclude from all the foregoing, that Christ by word and deed condemned all forcible resistance, and we find that He carried this out to its logical results:

Government reposes upon force, hence the Christian should not share in governing. And this is just what Jesus says: "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and their great ones exercise authority upon them, *but so shall it not be among you.*"

Governments engage frequently in war, but a Christian should not take part in war, and so Christ says: "If My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight." He says: "Judge not," and He shows what He means by refusing to adjudicate on the contested inheritance, and by refusing to condemn the guilty woman, and in both cases

setting aside the law of Moses. And in fact, as we have seen, He attacks the foundations of that law by expressly enjoining non-resistance as a substitute for the *lex talionis*.

After examining Christ's words and example we cannot easily escape the conviction that Tolstoy has entered into their meaning far more fully than the accepted commentators of any church, and the arguments which are used to show that Christ did not mean what He said may be applied with equal force to Tolstoy's writings, and perhaps before he has been dead many years we shall have books published to show that the Russian reformer, like his Master, had no objection to riches or violence.

The position taken by most Christians that Jesus made it a rule to say what He did not mean is fast becoming untenable. Common intellectual honesty before long will have completely undermined it. We must choose between Christ plus His teachings on the one hand and an honest paganism on the other. I once read the portions of the Sermon on the Mount which refer to turning the other cheek and giving up one's cloak to my nine-year old boy with the object of getting his opinion. His response was brief and to the point. "Oh, what stuff," was the only comment. I value this answer as a frank expression of judgment. If every Christian who, in the bottom of his

heart, believes that these injunctions are "stuff" would cordially say so, it would be a great gain to the cause of truthfulness, whatever the result might be on the dogma of the inspiration of the Gospels.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE CHRISTIAN TEACHING IN PRACTICE

ARE the injunctions of Christ practicable? We can only answer that they have often proved so, and we find the clearest answer in the history of Christianity itself. If St. Peter's plan of defence by the sword had been adopted, pagan Rome would have conquered in an hour, but by resolutely refusing to strike back under the severest provocation, the little band of Christians finally overcame the Empire with all its legions; the meek actually did inherit the earth; and Jesus was so sure of the success of His method, that He could say, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

And this prophecy is coupled with the command to seek first the Kingdom of God and to "sell that ye have." The practical power of

the same teachings was shown again by Francis of Assissi, whose preaching swept over the civilized world and did much to heal the corruptions of the Church and to create Christian art. The achievements of the Quakers must also be put down to the credit of non-resistance. What other Christian body has such a record in social matters ? To them is due the agitations against war, the increased regard for the rights of women, and the abolition of slavery. Lloyd Garrison was not a Quaker, but he was a non-resistant and one of the most extreme. Is it a mere coincidence that this typical non-resistant should have been the man who, in the history of America, has, without any exception, accomplished the most for humanity ?

At the close of the war, when President Lincoln was congratulated on having liberated the slaves, he replied with much truth, that he had only been an instrument, and that the moral power of Garrison and his followers had done all. I must dwell for a moment upon the character of Garrison to show what stuff non-resistants are made of. Let us judge him by the first number of the *Liberator*, which was published on January 1, 1831. Garrison had just been released from gaol, a penniless youth of five-and-twenty, without resources or connexions. He bought some paper and second-hand type on credit ; he and his assistant were forced by want to live for many months chiefly



on "bread and milk, a few cakes and a little fruit." Their printing office was an attic room where they both slept on the floor. From this point of vantage, he thundered forth thus in his first leading article :

"The standard is now unfurled : : : Let the enemies of the persecuted blacks tremble. : : : I will be as harsh as Truth and as uncompromising as Justice. : : : I am in earnest. I will not equivocate ; I will not excuse ; I will not retract a single inch ; AND I WILL BE HEARD. Posterity will bear testimony that I was right."

And posterity has so borne witness and has long since decided that no man ever did a man's work in a manlier way than the non-resistant Garrison.

We see from Garrison's case that non-resistance does not mean non-interference. No class of men has interfered more frequently or more effectively than non-resistants. In the case of the oppressed Armenians and Cubans, as in that of slavery, their voice would have been the first to cry out for justice, but it would have been a cry and not a blow. It was the standing armies of Europe, with the international jealousies centreing in them, which prevented effectual moral interference in Turkey on behalf of Armenia.

Another interesting example of non-resistance is given in King's History of Ohio. He



devotes one chapter to the Moravians who in the eighteenth century went into the wilderness to preach this doctrine to the savages. Here are King's words :

“ The faith they sought to implant was mainly love. To go in this panoply before the wild Indians of America, it must be admitted, was proof of great faith. . . . Strangely the direction thus taken and the sensibilities thus appealed to proved to be precisely adapted to the Indian nature, and had a power which, under different circumstances, might have made a different history for the red man.” This is certainly a remarkable admission for a historian who has no brief for non-resistance, and is simply relating the facts as he finds them ; but on looking into the records we see that these facts fully bear him out in his conclusions.

One of the leading Delaware warriors, and the principal orator of the tribe, Glickhican by name, heard of the inroads which the Moravians were making among his fellow Indians, and he came from a distance to see them with the express object of silencing them by argument. To the surprise of all he was himself convinced, and he laid aside his arms and joined them notwithstanding the taunts of the other warriors. Many others followed his example, and so highly were the Moravians honoured by all the Dela-

wares that they were adopted as members of the tribe. Three villages of non-resistant Indians were established and the "lands, houses and crops of the colony were common property."

"The neighbouring Indians were soon attracted by the novel scene. It was not by a change of heart only that the brethren counted upon the efficacy of their cause. Through the door and school of industry they sought to draw the Indians to the closer ties of Christian peace, order and love."

"It is easy to perceive . . . how the Indians were drawn to the Moravians. Goodwill once secured, their great aim was to convert the savage to their life of peace and love. To accomplish it, these wild sons of the forest were constantly urged to turn their thoughts away from blood and rapine to the love of Him who gave to the world all its humanity, and in whose bosom the red man and the white alike found rest. The daily hymns and worship, which so much engaged the Indians, all the exhortations of the preachers, turned upon the one great point of compelling them to live and die like Him who died rather than resist the violence of His enemies. It sought a total reverse of their nature. But the Passion and Crucifixion, as wrought up in the intense and fervent pictures of the Moravian exhorters, seldom failed to rivet the attention

of even the fiercest warrior ; for it was that supreme heroism of the captive, in the last agony of torture, which was his greatest aspiration ; and he was ready to adore it.

“ While the unregenerate braves looked with scorn upon the Christian forgiveness and humility which could turn the other cheek when struck, yet before this ideal many of them yielded, and in silent homage with the praying Indians, as they were called, forsook the war-path. Among them were a number of distinguished chiefs.”

Mr. King thinks that if the Moravians had founded their settlement ten years earlier or later, they would have had a permanent effect upon the destiny of the American aborigines, but they had fallen upon evil times. The Revolution broke out in 1775 and from that moment efforts were made to drag the Delaware Indians into the conflict. For five years the missionaries and the Christian Indians succeeded in persuading them to preserve neutrality. A Wyandot embassy came offering them the war-belt, but the Delawares answered that “ they had engaged to hold the chain of friendship with both hands, and therefore could spare no hands to take hold of the war-belt.” The Moravian villagers entertained all war-parties hospitably and were not molested by them:

But finally the hostilities of the whites

brought disaster upon the missions: Three border ruffians arrived who had been confined in American prisons and now wished to unite all the Indians against their former captors. They spread false reports about the missionaries among the red men, and made two attempts to assassinate them. The Moravians found themselves at last obliged to move their villages.

“The hideous truth now dawned upon them that, secure as they felt themselves among the savages, their real enemies were the whites, and that the worst of these were those to whom they were most friendly, the Americans.”

The English, believing that the Moravians were too friendly to the Americans, instigated the Six Nations to drive them out. The Indians were forced to this by threats, the missionaries were seized and robbed, and the houses of the Christian Indians pillaged. Glickhican refused to defend himself, and was taken prisoner. He was, however, discharged, and again the Moravians emigrated to another place, where they nearly died of starvation. They returned to the site of their old village to gather the standing corn, and there they were treacherously murdered by a band of ninety-six Americans. Glickhican was one of those massacred, and to the end refused to defend himself, although if he had

raised the war-cry, his reputation as a warrior would have given new courage to his companions, and would perhaps have assured their escape. This calamity put an end to the Moravian missions.

Another more recent example of the practicability of Christ's teachings among savage tribes is given by the Rev. Henry Richards, an English missionary in the service of the American Baptist Missionary Society. He went out to Banka Mantekel, on the Congo, in 1879, and was the first missionary in that neighbourhood. He found that the natives were inveterate thieves and considered it a compliment to be called liars, but cruelty is not one of their faults. He says :

" I do not believe the African is by any means naturally a cruel man. I believe the Anglo-Saxon to be naturally far more cruel and brutal than the African: When graceless white men go away from all the restraints of society, from public opinion, from the salt of the earth, from the direct influence of Christianity, they seem to become demons. I have seen more brutal things done by one white man in one day than I have ever seen done among the Africans all the time I have lived among them."

For some years he taught the natives from the Old Testament, but with no effect: " I began," he says, " to study the Scriptures and



to feel that there was some mistake in my preaching." He concluded that it was the Gospel and not the law which they needed: "I considered that the best way to preach the Gospel was to take Luke's Gospel, as this seemed the most complete and most suitable for Gentiles. I began translating ten or twelve verses a day as best I could, and then read and expounded them to the people, asking God to bless His word. The people were at once more interested in the Gospel than when I preached the law, for when I preached the law the people were evidently irritated and turned away from me, as they did not like to be accused of sin. When I preached of the Lord Jesus coming as a baby, growing up to be a boy, and that He went about doing good, the people were at once interested, and I began to get hopeful, my faith was strengthened, and I believed that anybody could be converted. This went on very well until I got to the sixth chapter of Luke, thirtieth verse, then another difficulty arose. I should mention in describing the character of the people that they were notorious beggars. They would ask for anything they saw. They would ask for my only knife, blanket or plate, and I would say that I could not give them to them, and they would say, 'You can get more.' They would see me write a note and send it down to Palabala and things would come up, and they thought the



white man, by merely writing a note, could get everything he wanted, and wasn't he mean and selfish not to give them all they asked for.

"Now here comes the text, 'Give to every one that asketh thee.' I had been in the habit of taking things in their order. The man who helped me with my translating did not see my difficulty, and I told him that I did not need him further that day, and went to my room and prayed. The time for the service was coming on. We had daily service, and the thought came, why not pass over that verse, and then my conscience stung me, which said that that would not be honest. Service time came, but I did not go on with the Gospel, but went back to the beginning, and I thought this would give me some time to consider the meaning of this text. I could not find that it meant anything else than what it said. I consulted a commentary. I had often done this before, and very often found that it says nothing about the very text which I wish to know about, but this did say something. It said the Lord is speaking on general principles, and we should do a great deal of harm, instead of doing good, if we were to take it literally, for we should give to idlers, drunkards, etc. What the Lord Jesus means is simply that you should be kind and generous, and give to those who are really in need ; but you have also to use your common sense.

“I thought after reading this, Why did not Jesus say just what He meant? Was He so badly educated that He could not express His thoughts correctly? If He does not mean what He says here, how can I know that He does in other places? I know that He uses figures and parables that may be interpreted differently, but here is a text that a child can understand, and if this text can be interpreted into being kind and generous, why not others on the same broad principles?

“If we are allowed to interpret Scriptures in this way we might teach any doctrine we like from them. : : : Then as to common sense, there seems to be very little what is ordinarily called common sense in the Sermon on the Mount. Would common sense ever dictate such precepts as these: ‘Blessed are the poor,’ ‘the hungry,’ ‘the weeping,’ ‘Blessed are ye when men shall hate you?’ Is this according to common sense? Does not common sense teach us that we are blessed when we have everything and are well off and happy? We are to love those who hate us, and to pray for our enemies; would common sense dictate this? Would common sense say, ‘If a man strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other: Common sense would say, ‘If a man strikes you on one cheek, you give him another.’ Would common sense say, ‘If thy enemy hunger, feed him?’ Common sense would say,

‘ Let him starve and the quicker he is dead the better.’ ‘ Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, but treasures in heaven.’ Does not common sense say, ‘ Lay up a good store for this earth, and then talk of spiritual things ? ’ ‘ Seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and His righteousness.’ Does not common sense say, ‘ Secure the dollars by might ? ’ . : .

“ A missionary passed down at this time, and I mentioned to him my difficulty, but he smiled and said, ‘ No one lives up to the Gospel literally like that,’ and passed on. I never have been able to see how it could be understood figuratively. Our commander has given us a very solemn warning at the end of the Sermon on the Mount (Luke vi. 46-49) : ‘ And why call ye Me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say ? Every one that cometh unto Me, and heareth My words, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like ; he is like a man building a house, who digged and went deep, and laid a foundation upon the rock ; and when a flood arose the stream brake against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well builded. But he that heareth and doeth not is like a man that built a house upon the earth without a foundation, against which the stream brake, and straightway it fell in ; and the ruin of that house was great.’ : : :

“ After about a fortnight of prayer and con-

sideration, I came to the conclusion that the Lord Jesus meant just what He said, and I went and read it to the people. I told them that they knew I had not lived this, but Jesus meant just what He said. If I had told them that Jesus did not mean what He said, they would have called me a fool. I told them that God had set before us a very high standard, but it would probably take me a life-time to live up to it, but I meant to live what I preached to them. The natives there have common sense, and they would easily see any discrepancy between a man's life and preaching. After the address was over, the natives began to ask me for things ; one asked me for this, and another for that, and I gave to them. I began to think whereunto this would grow, but I told the Lord that I could not see that He meant anything different from what He said. I would test this text, and though I could not understand all, I would wait until I could. This went on for a day or two.

“ . . . This created quite a stir among the people. They had never heard such preaching nor seen such living, and they would now listen eagerly to the Word of God. One day a group of people was waiting outside after the service, and from the window in my house I could see them, but they could not see me, and one said ‘ I got this from the white man yesterday,’ and another said, ‘ I am going to ask the white man

for things like that,' but another said, 'No, if you want it, buy it,' another, 'Yes, buy it, if you want it.' After that I lived there three years amongst these people and they rarely asked me for a thing. A missionary came up during the revival, and said that he was delighted to see the people turning from dumb idols to God, and he asked me how it began. I told him my experience and about my difficulty with that text, and he asked if I supposed that it really meant what it said. Then he said, 'But these people know you; you have lived here for seven years, but if you were to go to Palabala they would ask for your house and turn you out.' I had been to Palabala and they always did beg, but my wife and I went there afterwards and remained a week and no one asked me for a single thing.

"We were asked how we would live up to this when we got back to England, as there was so much distress there. We lived there for more than a year but found no difficulty in carrying out that text."

The result of Mr. Richards' new method of presenting the Gospel was that he soon had a thousand converts where before he had not had one, and he testifies that they are really Christian people in heart as well as name. "I protest against their coming to England or America, as they would see a corrupt form of Christianity," he declares. He sums up the



lesson of his experiences in one sentence : " I do believe that if we seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, all the necessary things will be supplied, because it is His promise."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE TOLSTOY OF TO-DAY

THAT the examples of the success of Christ's teachings should be so few is due to the fact that they have been so rarely tested. Count Tolstoy is making the experiment to-day, and no one who has visited him at his home, as I have had the privilege of doing, and has looked into his searching eyes under their heavy brows, can for a moment doubt his sincerity. He has stripped his house of everything superfluous, there is not a rug on the floor, not an ornament on the table ; his dress is the peasant's blouse ; he has become a vegetarian and touches neither coffee nor tea nor sugar nor tobacco. That there is a vein of asceticism in all this, I am not disposed to deny. A German admirer of his has called him the John the Baptist of the new religion of the Spirit, and if sometimes we are



inclined to criticize him for denying himself unnecessarily and for making the externals of life a little too bare, we should remember that there was room in the world for John whose food was locusts and wild honey, and for Jesus who came eating and drinking, and that wisdom is justified of all her children. There is a place in our economy for the Tolstoys as well as for the Ruskins and Morrises. And if there seems to be little art in the exterior appearances of Tolstoy's life, it is not because he is not an artist and has not faced the question of art and answered it to his own satisfaction. But he denies to the art of the day, the luxurious plaything of the exploiting few, all claim to be considered as art at all.

True art, he believes, is a human activity by means of which the artist passes on to others feelings through which he has lived, so that they become infected by them. It is thus a means of uniting men through their feelings. The deepest feeling of the present time is that of brotherhood, of love, and harmony, and true art must have as its object the radiating of this feeling. Tried by this standard almost all the art of the day is found lacking, and Tolstoy is willing to wait until a new and true way of life has produced a new and true art. That he may not be separated from his fellows, he works as he may in the fields and he also learned a trade. His aim is to support him-

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self by manual labour and at any rate to be worth his own "keep." He also is continually engaged in writing articles and books addressed to the peasants or to the educated classes. The most conspicuous of these in recent years was his great novel *Resurrection*, a telling indictment of caste and government which has challenged the attention of the world. As for the duty of the individual, Tolstoy teaches that it is to do the next loving thing. We should do to others as we would have them do to us. "Only when I yield myself," says he, "to that intuition of love which demands obedience to this law is my own heart happy and at rest. And not only can I know how to act, but I can and do discern the work to co-operate in which my activity was designed and is required." "This work is the annihilation of discord and strife among people and among all creatures and the establishment of the highest unity, concord and love. Man should always co-operate in the development of love and union among created things." It is to man's cultivated instinct, to his conscience illuminated by unselfishness, and not to his powers of reasoning that Tolstoy looks for the triumph of his ideas. Thus he says :

"To many people of our society it would be impossible to torture or kill a baby, even if they were told that by so doing they could save hundreds of other people. And in the

same way a man, when he has developed a Christian sensibility of heart, finds a whole series of actions become impossible for him. For instance, a Christian who is obliged to take part in judicial proceedings in which a man may be sentenced to death, or who is obliged to take part in evictions, or in debating a proposal leading to war, or to participate in preparations for war, not to mention war itself, is in a position parallel to that of a kindly man called on to torture or kill a baby."

And as man's instincts improve and reform his conduct, so the instinct of society, which is public opinion, will reform society. War and violence will cease because they will become progressively repugnant to the hearts of men.

It would be a mistake to consider Tolstoy's views as the product of an isolated mind. He is in many respects the representation of all that is best in his dearly loved Russian peasantry. Le Roy Beaulieu tells us in his work on the *Empire of the Tzars and the Russians* (vol. iii., chap. 3), that the Russian common people are remarkable for their "charity and humility, and what is rarer still and almost unknown in the same class in other countries, for their spirit of asceticism and renouncement, love of poverty, and the taste for self-mortification and sacrifice." He also shows us that the moral ideal of the people is complete chastity. It is then as the mouth-piece of the Russian

peasantry, among whom he has learned the lesson of his life, that Tolstoy finds his chief significance, and they are fortunate in having a man of such genius and character to represent them.

And here we leave this great teacher—great especially in his candour and simplicity. A strange figure—this peasant nobleman, this aristocrat, born into the ruling class of an autocracy, who condemns all government and caste, this veteran of two wars who proscribes all bloodshed, this keen sportsman turned vegetarian, this landlord who follows Henry George, this man of wealth who will have nothing to do with money, this famous novelist who thinks that he wasted his time in writing most of his novels, this rigid moralist, one of whose books at least, the *Kreutzer Sonata*, was placed under the ban of the American Post Office. That same dramatic instinct which made him a great novelist, which impelled Sir Henry Irving to rank his two plays among the best of the past century, and which, as we have seen, has so often led him to find lessons in the active world around him, this same instinct has made of this least theatrical and most self-forgetful of men the dramatic prefigurement in his own person of a reunited race, set free by love from the shackles of caste and violence. As it was with the prophets of old, so with him, there is a deeper significance

in his life, in the tragedy of himself, than in the burden of his spoken message. He is the protagonist to-day of the drama of the human soul. A stage which can put forward such a protagonist has no reason for despair:

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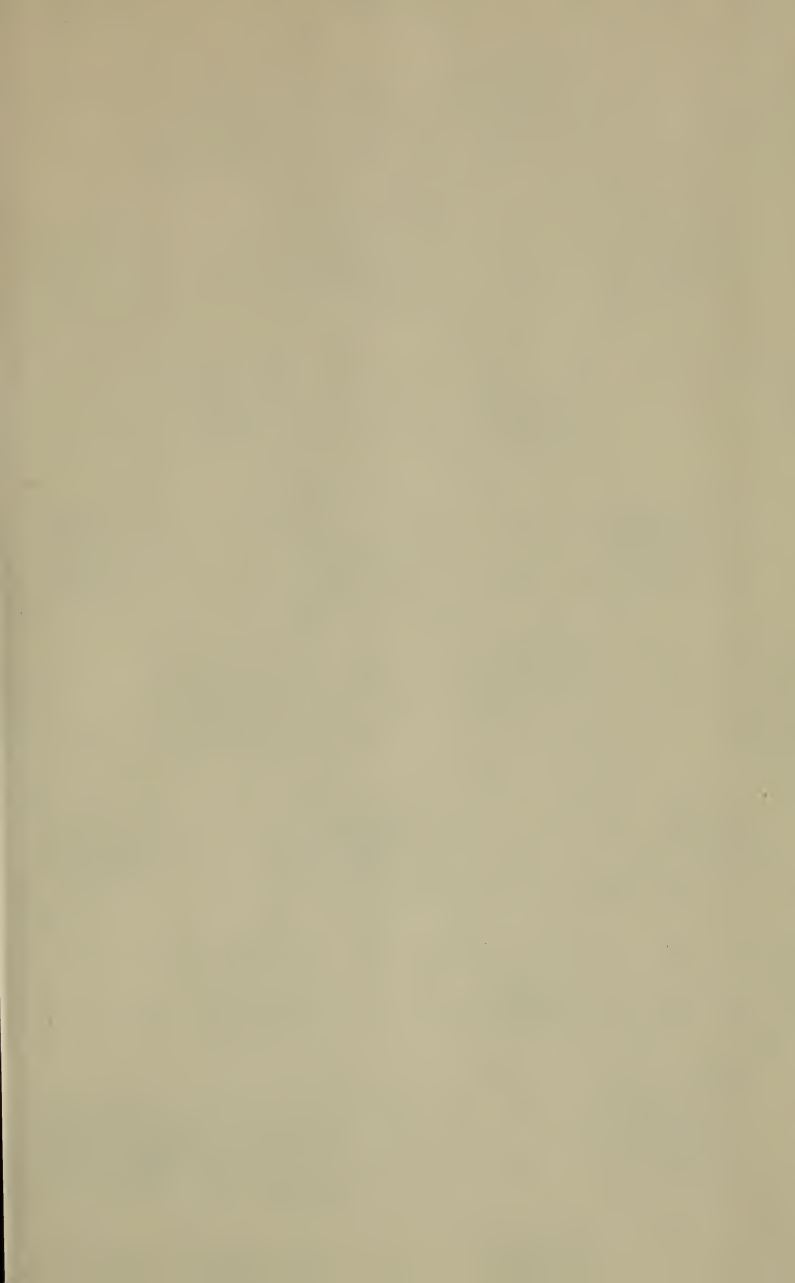
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